

WRITTEN IN WATER

Glossary of terms

Paramapadam

The 2nd century *Paramapadam* game takes players on an allegorical journey along which they encounter 12 vices and 5 virtues on a search for ultimate wisdom. On the 100-square grid of the gameboard, virtues are depicted as ladders that carry a player forward, and vices as snakes that slide him or her backward. Historically, the game was used as a way to explore deep spiritual, philosophical, and moral questions of human existence. (It was later adapted by the British, who stripped it of its moral content and named it Snakes & Ladders.)

The Conference of the Birds

Composed in the twelfth century in north-eastern Iran, Fard Ud-Din Attar's great mystical poem is among the most significant of all works of Persian literature. An allegorical rendering of the Islamic doctrine of Sufism - an esoteric system concerned with the search for truth through God - it describes the consequences of the conference of the birds of the world when they meet to begin the search for their ideal king, the Simorgh bird. On hearing that to find him they must undertake an arduous journey, the birds soon express their reservations to their leader, the hoopoe. With eloquence and insight, however, the hoopoe calms their fears, using a series of riddling parables to provide guidance in the search for spiritual truth.

Iraqi Maqam

Maqam is the urban classical vocal tradition of Iraq. In Iraq, the term *maqam* refers to highly-structured, semi-improvised, compositions that take years of disciplined study under a master to learn fully. Often rhythmically free and meditative, they are sung to classical Arabic and colloquial Iraqi poetry, and are followed by light-hearted, rhythmic songs, known as *pestaat*. Found primarily in the cities of Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basra, the *maqam* repertoire draws upon musical styles of the many populations in Iraq, such as the Bedouins, rural Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen as well as neighboring Persians, Turks, and other populations that have had extensive contact with Iraq throughout history.

Carnatic music

Carnatic music is a system of music commonly associated with the southern part of the Indian subcontinent, with its area roughly confined to five modern states of India: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. Although there are stylistic differences, the basic elements of *śruti* (the relative musical pitch), *swara* (the musical sound of a single note), *rāga* (the mode or melodic formulæ), and *tala* (the rhythmic cycles) form the foundation of improvisation and composition in Carnatic music. Carnatic instrumentation usually consists of a principal performer (usually a vocalist), a melodic accompaniment (usually a violin), a rhythm accompaniment (usually a *mridangam*), and a *tambura*, which acts as a *drone* throughout the performance.

Sangam poetry

The Tamil Sangam poets (300 B.C.E. – 300 C.E.) of South India saw divinity in the physical world. Recognizing that human activities are interwoven with all of creation, they drew parallels between inner landscape and outer landscape and used the natural world as a metaphor to examine the intricacies of human emotion. The *tinais* thus become more than geographical realms. Each region's particular qualities—flora and fauna, climate and seasons, music and culture, people and daily life—are interwoven with the area's emotional tones to create a distinct portrait of mood and setting. Characters in Sangam literature are never named, rather they represent ideals—paradigms of the human condition.